

Message Text

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66

ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /090 W
----- 070236

R 011530Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6252

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY RABAT

USMISSION USUN NY

USCINCEUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

FOSIF ROTA

COMSIXTHFLT

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 2122

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR, MOPS, MR, SS

SUBJECT: POLISARIO ATTACKS ATAR

1. EMBASSY HAS LEARNED FROM VARIETY OF MAURITANIAN AND DIP-
LIMATIC SOURCES THAT POLISARIO FORCES ATTACKED TOWN OF
ATAR ON AUGUST 30. DETAILS, HOWEVER, ARE NOT AVAILABLE.
SPANISH AMBASSADOR, ALTHOUGH AWARE OF ATTACK, WAS UNWILLING
TO SPECULATE ON SIZE OF POLISARIO FORCE. MOROCCAN CHARGE
INSISTED THAT IT WAS NOT A MAJOR ENGAGEMENT. SPANIARD
COMMENTED THERE WAS ALSO SMALL POLISARIO ATTACK ABOUT WEEK
AGO ON AARGUB IN MAURITANIAN PORTION OF WESTERN SAHARA.

2. EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED UNCONFIRMED REPORT THAT THERE WAS
POLISARIO-INSPIRED SHOOTING IN NORTHERN PORT CITY OF
NOUADHIBOU ON AUGUST 31. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION TODAY,
MOROCCAN CHARGE SAID HE WAS NOT AWARE OF THIS REPORT.

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3. COMMENT: BATTLEFRONT IN MAURITANIA HAS BEEN UNUSUAL-
LY QUIET SINCE LATE JULY. ALTHOUGH POESALIO ATTACK ON
ATAR MAY BE NOTHING MORE THAN ISOLATED INCIDENT, IT HAS
HAD EFFECT IN PAST 24 HOURS OF CRANKING RUMOR MILL INTO
HIGH GEAR. COUPLED WITH GENERALIZED EDGINESS CREATED BY
CURRENT RAMADAN FAST, ATAR ATTACK MAY WELL CAUSE GIRM
FORCES TO INCREASE SUBSTANTIALLY THEIR STATE OF ALERT.
WE NOTED, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT SECURITY FORCES WERE OUT TODAY
IN EVEN LARGER NUMBERS THAN IS USUAL WHEN PRESIDENT RE-
TURNS FROM OFFICIAL VISIT OVERSEAS. SHINN

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